

INSIGHTS

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How to know you are doing a good job

We all want to know we are doing a good job as a parent. Here's a guide to help you assess if you're on track as a parent.

At the end of a parenting evening a mother asked a question I'd never been asked before – *'How do I know I'm doing a good job as a parent?'*

Top question, that gets to the heart of parenting. You don't get a lot of feedback as a mum or a dad to know if you are on track.

Without becoming too technical here's a rough guide to help you assess if you are doing a good job as a parent. Ask yourself these questions (by the way, I'm assuming you are meeting kids' physical needs of food, sleep and the like):

- 1. Are your kids, by and large, happy and content (even your grumpy child)?** The notion of happiness & contentment is an indicator of a child's well-being. It indicates that there is some stability and predictability at home, which kids need to thrive.
- 2. Is family-life relatively predictable & stable?** Most kids like routine and order as it enables them to focus on what they are meant to be doing – which is growing, learning and developing. When there is order and routine kids can focus their energies on these things, rather than try to work out what may be happening next.
- 3. Is the environment you provide psychologically and physically safe?** Some kids grow up in toxic environments where criticism and bullying is rife, and kids can do as they wish, which puts their safety at risk. Encouragement, praise, positive feedback, catching kids doing the right thing or being brave all make up a psychologically safe environment.
- 4. Are kids learning and developing?** This is an indicator that things are going well for kids. I know some kids experience difficulty, but *effective parenting involves clearing the path to learning for all children.*
- 5. Do you feel like you are in charge, or do children rule the roost?** Someone needs to be the leader of the family, and it's best if it's an adult. Okay, all kids push the boundaries. It's their job. But parents, by and large, need to direct the daily action and make wise decisions for kids. Kids should make some decisions, but only according to their age and stage of development.
- 6. Do you give kids opportunities to socialise with other kids and adults?** As a parent you have some say in directing the socialisation process for kids. *They need to learn to get along with others and move from 'me' to 'we'.* You help this process by providing opportunities to socialise, teaching manners and reminding them (all the time) about 'getting on' with others.

7. Are you developing the skills of independent living? The job of every parent is to work toward redundancy so effective parents do more **with** kids, and less for them.

8. Is love and affection in the air (balanced by firmness)? Kids need to feel loved and that they are loveable. You let kids know they are loved through your actions and words. Being told 'I love you' by an adult you respect and admire is an incredibly reassuring, empowering thing.

9. Is family-life fun.....at least some of the times? Humour and fun are the building blocks for mental health (& relationships too). They relieve tension and stress. *That's why dads who tell jokes (even if they're really bad!) are welcome in families.*

10. Do other people think you're doing a good job? How would most people assess your parenting? There will always be some people who think you are doing a poor job of it (sometimes they are related to you), but what would the majority of people say? Would they give you a thumbs up or a thumbs down?

11. Are you happy in your role? This is tricky. We all get down on ourselves and our kids from time to time. But hopefully you are getting some joy from your parenting. If so, this will show through to your kids in lots of ways. If not, then perhaps you need to work out what's stopping you, and then make plans to change the situation. That could be working on your parenting skills (lack of skills prevents many parents from enjoying their parenting), or even getting some professional assistance if you feel that you are stuck in a parenting or personal rut.

Hopefully, you read this little list and **nodded** your head far more than you shook it. It's not meant to be an objective, comprehensive list. It's more of a subjective, **common sense checklist** to help you work out that in fact, YOU ARE DOING A GOOD JOB AS A PARENT !

We all try our best, and sometimes we mess up. But, by and large, kids forgive you your transgressions. But there is one thing that they all want. That is, they expect and rely on your fair dinkum, honest commitment to always act in their best interests. In some ways, that's the best test of effective parenting.

Want to know if your parenting style is suitable for raising today's kids?

Take my FREE **Which Parenting Style Are You?** Parenting quiz at Parentingideas.com.au and discover your parenting style. There are also some practical implementation ideas to help you adopt a parenting style suitable for your kids today.

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